THE MIZAN NEWSLETTER

No. 8 August 1959

The Mizan Newsletter aims at giving an objective and balanced account of current Soviet writings on the Middle East.

THE USSR AND THE MIDDLE EAST COMMUNIST PARTIES

In his report to the XXIst CPSU Congress on 27th January 1959 Khrushchev categorically affirmed that individual Communist Parties outside the Soviet Union were independent of direction from Moscow or control by the Soviet Communist Party. He said:

> "All Communist Parties are independent and work out their policy on the basis of the concrete conditions of their particular country... The ideologists of imperialism...spread false allegations that the Communist movement is the work of Moscow's hands and that the Communist and Workers' Parties are dependent on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union... It is absurd to think that it would be possible for anyone outside a country to organize in that country a political party of the working class, a party which not infrequently comprises hundreds of thousands and sometimes even millions of members... Communist Parties have not originated because some centre has planted them in every country. There are no such miracles in nature! The history of the development of society shows that with the appearance and growth of the working class Marxist parties originate... Communist Parties are political parties of the working class, and they will exist while the working class exists."

The Soviet Union, said Khrushchev, was "the bulwark of all socialist countries and of the world communist movement", but the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did not guide any parties, nor did the Soviet Union guide any countries. Every Communist Party, independent and equal with every

other was "responsible to the working class, the working people of its country, and the whole international workers' and communist movement".

Such a statement exemplifies the striking change in the official Soviet attitude toward foreign Communist Parties which has taken place in recent years. In 1951, for example, it was still possible for the policy of the Communist Party of India to be publicly criticized at a conference at the Institute for Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (IZVESTIYA AKADEMII NAUK SSSR, History and Philosophy Series, IX, No. 1). Soviet periodical and other writings today show that problems of Communist Party policy in eastern countries are still followed with the closest attention in Moscow; general formulas appropriate to present-day Party situations are outlined, but they are not presented as direct Soviet suggestions or advice.

Since 1958, moreover, Soviet writers have avoided direct references to the policies of individual Middle East Communist Parties. During the period 1955-7 there was a close correspondence between Soviet pronouncements on Middle East affairs and the public statements of Middle East Communist Party spokesmen; statements by Middle East Communist Party leaders were quoted freely in Soviet writings. Recently Middle East Communist Party spokesmen - notably those of the UAR and Iraq - have been vocal in proclaiming their own policies and criticizing those of their Governments. This finds some echo in Soviet pronouncements, but it loses much in the process.

Communism and national movements A central problem of Middle East Communist Parties has been their attitude towards nationalist movements. The Soviet view of what this attitude should be has undergone development and modification since 1955. In 1955, in an article in SOVETSKOYE VOSTOKOVEDENIYE No. 5 entitled "The growth of the national consciousness of the peoples of the Arab countries", L.N. Vatolina affirmed the basic unity of purpose of "progressive" and "national liberation" movements in the Arab East; "the liberation struggle of the Arab countries", she declared, "fuses with the struggle of the whole of progressive humanity for peace, independence and democracy". The Communist Parties of the Arab countries, said Vatolina, were calling for the formation of a united national front, and with some success, notably in Syria. Meanwhile, Vatolina noted, the Arab national movement had for its part espoused certain progressive causes: "the national liberation struggle in the Arab countries is at the present stage closely interwoven with the labour and agrarian movement."

By 1957 Soviet ideological support for Arab nationalism had been carried a stage further. In an article entitled "The July 1952 Revolution in Egypt", in SOVETSKOYE VOSTOKOVEDENIYE No. 2 of 1957, V.B. Lutskiy praised the aims and ideals of the Egyptian revolution, and declared: "The development of the Egyptian revolution is proceeding with the active and decisive participation of the popular masses." Lutskiy noted that in January 1952 "the people's organizations", including "Communist groups", had been broken up, and that this was part of the reason why the actual coup of July 1952

was effected without their participation. Lutskiy makes no other mention of the Communist movement in his article. He says that, as the "anti-imperialist and anti-feudal" character of the new regime became clearer, so "the role of the people's masses in the revolutionary development of the country became greater".

This Soviet attitude was much modified after Abd an-Nasir's public denunciation of the Syrian Communists in December 1958. To this Khrushchev retorted on 27th January at the CPSU Congress (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 2, Appendix A) with a vigorous affirmation of his support for the Middle East Communists, upholding them as the most determined fighters in the struggle against imperialism. In his speech on 16th March (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 4, appendix) Khrushchev went further to make disparaging references to Arab nationalism itself, condemning manifestations of it which he regarded as directed against "the interests of the working people".

Reaffirmation of basic principles A recent article in PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA (No. 2 of 1959, by A.M. D'yakov and G.Z. Sorkin) presents the relationship between communism and eastern national movements in a wide historical setting, and in so doing reinforces Khrushchev's contention that "there is no one more steadfast and devoted to the struggle against the colonizers than the communists". The article (to mark the 40th anniversary of the Third Communist International) reviews those decisions of the Comintern congresses (1919-1935) which referred to "the national colonial question" and the problems of the Communist movement in dependent or newly independent countries.

The article is interesting for its possible relevance to the present-day strategy of eastern Communist Parties. The resolutions of the Comintern are praised as having "promoted the formation of Communist Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries, helped them to get rid of sectarian errors, mobilized them for the creation and consolidation of a wide anti-imperialist front, and educated them in the spirit of proletarian internationalism". The events of the 16 years since the disbandment of the Comintern, the authors assert, have confirmed the correctness of its basic pronouncements on "the national colonial question". Comintern resolutions which are quoted in the article are presumably such as are valid and applicable today; the following are examples:

> "In the theses (presented by Lenin to the second Comintern congress) the necessity was underlined of resolutely fighting against every effort on the part of non-revolutionary, non-communist trends to give themselves out as revolutionary and communist. Communist Parties must preserve their independence and not merge with other parties in those cases where they make alliances or temporary agreements with them."

"The fourth Comintern congress emphasized the very great significance of the agrarian question in the fight for independence. The broad peasant masses can have a decisive influence on the course of the struggle with imperialism. Only an agrarian revolution having as its aim the abolition of large-scale land-ownership can rouse these masses to fight. For this reason it is necessary that Communist Parties should have their own agrarian programme based on the necessity of the complete annihilation of feudalism and its survivals."

The conclusion of the article is significant. It suggests that, now that in many formerly dependent countries the "national colonial question" has been solved, closer attention is being given to the workers of these countries and their problems:

"Since a whole series of countries which were formerly in colonial and semi-colonial dependence won national independence, the communists of these countries have been continuing to struggle for the consolidation of independence attained by means of the best solution of social problems in the interests of all the workers. This is the basic guarantee for the preservation of independence from infringement on the part of imperialism."

Communism and working-class movements The traditional nationalist ideals of political and economic independence are increasingly presented in Soviet writings as basically a working-class concern; and at the same time the more immediate social preoccupations of the working class and peasantry receive increasing attention from Soviet writers on eastern affairs. This is particularly shown in an article by V.V. Balabushevich in PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA No. 2 of 1959 entitled "Some peculiarities of the workers' movement in countries of the East in the present period".

In this article Balabushevich is concerned to place "national liberation movements" in their proper Marxist-Leninist perspective - in the perspective, that is to say, of what he calls "the struggle against imperialism and against the capitalist system as a whole". In this struggle, he says, the working class has "attained hegemony":

"Although for several reasons the proletariat in a number of countries did not play a leading part in the national liberation movement, none the less its active participation in the struggle gave the movement a mass character and cohesion, particularly in the towns. It determined its militant, offensive spirit, caused specifically proletarian fighting methods to be applied - general strikes, and in a number of cases armed risings - led to vacillations in the army and sometimes threatened the national bourgeoisie with a union of the streams of the workers' and

peasants' movement, a crisis in bourgeois leadership and the loss of its influence on the masses. The national bourgeoisie, during the course of the anti-imperialist struggle which it led, could not help but recognize that the proletariat is the motive force with the most solidarity and mass character capable of leading the movement."

The proletariat, says Balabushevich, has increased in strength and numbers during these years of struggle: after the winning of national independence, problems of economic liberation - the agrarian question and the acceleration of industrial development - move into the foreground; and here the class preoccupations of the bourgeoisie emerge very clearly:

"The national bourgeoisie, and particularly its leaders, as the exploiting class, strive to solve problems of general national importance first and foremost at the expense of the workers. This consequently creates objective premises for the further growth of the class struggle... The national bourgeoisie, taking into consideration the needs of capitalist development, is obliged in certain cases to bring about a partial improvement in the situation of the working class; but its class interest in the preservation of an extremely low standard of living for the working class is quite obvious, and this determines its opposition to the growing movement of the working class for a further improvement of its material position."

The ideologists of the national bourgeoisie, says Balabushevich, make every effort to damage the Communist Parties in the eyes of the workers; and to this end they make use themselves of the slogans of socialism. Balabushevich here refers not without sarcasm to measures of state capitalism (for more sympathetic Soviet references to state capitalism in eastern countries, see MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 2, pp 6-7; No. 5, p. 11; and No. 6, p. 3):

"The execution of measures of state capitalism in a number of countries and the presence of elements of economic planning is presented (by the bourgeoisie) as a proof of their development along a 'socialist' path but taking into consideration 'national peculiarities'."

But, Balabushevich affirms, the bourgeoisie's attacks on the Communist and workers' movement, whether in the field of ideology or by actual repression, have been powerless to prevent its further growth in the independent countries of the East.

The trade unions Balabushevich devotes a large part of his article to an analysis of the present situation of the trade unions in eastern countries. During the last three or four years, he says, there has been a "violent growth in the ranks of the trade unions in the East", and in particular of "the reformist trade unions led by the bourgeoisie". As a result of this, says Balabushevich, "the growth of organization among the workers has been substantially ahead of their class consciousness". This lays them open to "reformist" ideological influence; but it also offers an opportunity for the communists:

> "In connection with the rapid growth in the ranks of the trade unions not a few politically inexperienced workers have entered them who are not yet cast in the proletarian mould and who have not yet acquired militant traditions, but who, to make up for this, are uncorrupted by reformist ideology. This to a certain extent facilitates the dissemination of proletarian class ideology among the working masses. Activity among the working masses is helped, without doubt, by the fact that inside the reformist alliances and unions there are a number of revolutionary groups and whole trade unions."

In fact, says Balabushevich, the "reformist ideology" has not become widespread among the working class of eastern countries, and indeed the mass of rank-and-file members of "reformist" unions often exert pressure on their leaders, sometimes forcing them to change their policy on very important questions. "The tactic of a single workers' front is of great advantage to the cause of the political education of the proletariat and its victories with relation to Marxism-Leninism." The general aim must be the unity of the working class - "to rally the people's masses of the eastern countries to solve the historic problems confronting them".

In the light of the above, an article by D. Volsky on the Arab trade unions, in NEW TIMES No. 42 of 1958, is of interest. Volsky notes that the International Federation of Arab Unions has both organizational and sentimental links with the (Communist-controlled) World Federation of Trade Unions:

> "The IFAU has no international affiliations, although its representatives share in all the major undertakings of the WFTU. Arab union delegations have visited the USSR... The struggle against colonialism is the chief link between the federation and the WFTU. It is also the chief point of difference between the federation and the ICFTU, which, for all practical purposes, supports Western-Power colonial policy."

More recently, the situation of workers and trade unions in Middle Eastern countries was the subject of a feature in SOVREMENNY VOSTOK No. 5 of 1959, entitled "The workers of the East in the struggle for justice,

independence and peace". This consisted of a description of the situation of workers and peasants in Turkey, an account of the working conditions of non-American employees of Aramco in Saudi Arabia, and a report on the Iraqi trade union movement by Nihad Kirdar, member of the executive committee of the council of trade unions of Kirkuk. In another article, in NEW TIMES No. 19 of 1959, Kirdar gave an account of the trade union movement among Iraqi oil workers since the Iraqi revolution:

> "The working class played a tremendous role in this revolution, ensuring its genuinely mass character... The Iraqi workers began to form legal organizations. But here they encountered stiff opposition from the foreign monopolies, which had preserved their positions in our economy. The Iraq Petroleum Company, for instance, sought to set up a competing union at the Kirkuk oilfields. It allocated large sums to that end and printed thousands of leaflets. In its fight against the union it relied on a small group of scabs who had refused to strike in 1946 and had been rewarded with better jobs and other privileges. But in spite of all efforts the company's union was joined by only 400 men and disintegrated a few weeks later... Today we have about 40 unions. The oil workers' organization, with a membership of about 19,000, is one of the biggest."

After affirming the loyal support of all the unions for the Iraqi Government, "although their leaders do not all hold the same political views", Kirdar declared: "Our patriotic duty in peacetime is to promote the country's economy. The Iraqi oilmen are working enthusiastically, knowing very well that economic development requires money and that this money comes from the oil they produce."

In an article in NEW TIMES No. 28 of 1959, entitled "Iraqi Republic: the first year", Georgi Mirskiy referred to the Iraqi trade unions as follows:

> "A salient feature of present-day Iraq is the high activity of trade unions, youth, peasant and other mass organizations. Under Nuri as-Sa'id trade unions were practically non-existent. Now they are an important factor in the building of the new Iraq, helping to rally the workers for industrial expansion and resistance to reactionary intrigue. A while ago the press published a letter from the management of the Baghdad Communication Line and the Seed Products Company thanking the workers and their unions for their self-sacrificing efforts in increasing output and production".

The situation in Iraq Before the Iraqi revolution Soviet works on Iraq had emphasized the part played by the Iraqi Communist Party in movements for political and economic change, and it is now claimed that it played a prominent part in the revolution itself. A survey of recent events in the Middle East, published in MIROVAYA EKONOMIKA I MEZHDUNARODNIYE OTNOSHENIYA No. 7 of 1959, says that in carrying out the revolution the Iraqi army "relied on the widest strata of the population, and on the influential underground democratic organizations, among which the Communist Party occupied a prominent place."

Subsequent political disagreements between the Iraqi Communist Party and the Iraqi Government have found some reflection in Soviet publications. PRAVDA published in full the speech made on 2nd February at the CPSU Congress by Salam Adil of the Iraqi Communist Party (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 2, Appendix A); in this Salam Adil called for freedom for party political activity, participation in the Government, and elections to a "constituent assembly which would draw up a democratic constitution". This received no notice in Soviet pronouncements or writings on Iraq at the time. Recent Soviet accounts of developments in Iraq (cf. MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 7, pp.8-9) take note of the fact that the ban on political parties has not been lifted. But they affirm that, despite this, there is great political activity among the masses and that their voice is being heard.

Another matter about which Iraqi Communists find fault with their Government is the question of agrarian reform. An article on this subject by Zaki Hairi was published in World Marxist Review of April 1959. (WORLD MARXIST REVIEW is the English edition of PROBLEMS OF PEACE AND SOCIALISM, published in Prague, which is an organ of the world communist movement and not a Soviet publication - Ed.) All patriots and democrats, said Zaki Hairi, unanimously supported the agrarian reform law; but it had one defect.

> "Because of the vagueness of some of the provisions of the law the peasant masses must display vigilance to make sure that the authorities handling the reform do not permit any abuses, that they make every effort to distribute the land to as many peasants as possible, particularly the poorer ones... The vagueness of some passages of the law is such that, in order to prevent abuses, the agencies responsible for carrying out the reform need to be elective and subject to the control of the people... The law does not recommend cooperation with the peasant unions, or that the local supervisors be elected by the peasants or their unions. Legally speaking, this means that the peasants have no say in the bodies responsible for the reform. This, of course, is a serious defect. It means that the peasants are unable to exercise their main right - that of democratic control over the execution of the reform. And peasant control would have been the best guarantee against possible abuse."

The law, said Zaki Hairi, ought to provide for "commissions elected by the peasants". If the law were to fail - if it were to divide the peasants, for instance - this would "signify the defeat of the revolution and threaten the very existence of the republic, for it would clear the way for subversion by enemies". In Iraq the peasants were the main force of the democratic revolution; the peasant unions had played an important part in the July revolution. Zaki Hairi went on to criticize the establishment of compulsory cooperatives; cooperatives, he said, must be voluntary, working with the peasant unions; and the Government must recognize the peasant unions. (The law setting up peasants' societies was promulgated on 11th May - Ed.)

Soviet writers have suggested that the Iraqi agrarian reform law has shortcomings (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 7, pp. 6-7) but they have not mentioned the above as being among them. Recently, in fact, the scale of peasant participation in the agrarian reform has been remarked on, in an article in MIROVAYA EKONOMIKA I MEZHDUNARODNIYE OTNOSHENIYA No. 7 of 1959 by A. Fedchenko and L. Kotlov entitled "Iraq on the road of national renaissance":

> "Energetic and permanent participation of the peasantry in the implementation of agrarian reform is giving it the character of a genuinely democratic, revolutionary reform. The agrarian reform is drawing the broad masses of the peasantry into the anti-feudal movement and stimulating them to conscious social action. In the course of implementation of the reform the political and organizational experience of a thousand peasant 'activists' is forming and accumulating. They are becoming the champions and defenders of revolutionary ideas among the mass of the people. In various regions of the country peasant cooperatives have already been formed which carry out on their own initiative various measures relating to the improvement of the economy, irrigation, etc."

Similarly, in an article in NEW TIMES (No. 28 of 1959) on the first year of the Iraqi Republic G. Mirskiy said about the land reform:

> "True, about half the arable still remains in landlord hands, but the reform has definitely undermined feudalism, the mainstay of the old regime... Iraq is the first Arab state to give the peasants a share in solving the all-important agrarian problem."

Mirskiy ended his article with a tribute to Yusuf Salman Fahid, General Secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party, who was executed on 14th February 1949:

> "Fahid and many other members of the heroic Communist Party did not live to see the triumph of the people's cause. But the party that

reared these men and inspired their intrepid struggle lives, and its prestige among the people is higher than ever."

The situation in Syria Soviet accounts of Syria's modern history lay emphasis on the part played by the Syrian Communist Party in the pre-war struggle for independence, in the wartime underground resistance movement, and in post-war political movements - notably the overthrow of the Shishakli regime in 1954. Since no Soviet books dealing with Syrian Communism have been published since the establishment of the UAR, the Soviet view of the suppression of the Syrian Communist Party can only be deduced from passing references, such as Khrushchev's references to "measures being taken to suppress freedom-loving aspirations" in the UAR, in his speech of 16th March 1959 (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 4, appendix, pp. 4-5).

Syrian Communist spokesmen themselves, however, have not been reticent about the aims and situation of their party. WORLD MARXIST REVIEW of September 1958 reported as follows a reference by Khalid Bakdash, General Secretary of the Syrian Communist Party, to the UAR Government's pressure on his party:

> "An attempt was made to talk us into disbanding the party - at least formally and for a time - and (into) voting for the new Constitution, still far removed as it is from democratic principles. We declared that we were for Arab unity but that we would never vote for anti-democratic principles and would never agree to disband our Party. By the way, the Communist Party has no authority which could disband it."

After a meeting in November 1958 the Syrian Communist Party drew up a 13-point programme of which a brief account was given by Khalid Bakdash in his speech at the CPSU Congress in February 1959 (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 2, Appendix A, pp. 10-11). The first two items in this programme, according to WORLD MARXIST REVIEW of February 1959, were as follows:

> "1. It is necessary to create a parliament and Government in the Syrian region, and also a parliament and Government in the Egyptian region, together with a central parliament and a central Government concerned with national defence, foreign policy and other general matters. These bodies shall be created in a democratic way on the basis of universal and free parliamentary elections.
>
> "2. Grant democratic liberties: freedom of the press, assembly, demonstrations and the right to strike, freedom of trade unions and the right of all the people and patriotic forces to free political association."

The present aims of the Syrian Communist Party have received little notice in Soviet publications. An interesting exception was an article by A. Il'yasov in KOMMUNIST TURKMENISTANA of March 1959 entitled "Leninism, the banner of the national liberation struggle of eastern peoples". Il'yasov quoted statements made by Khalid Bakdash in PROBLEMS OF PEACE AND SOCIALISM, and noted some strictures of his concerning the agrarian situation in Syria:

> "As Khalid Bakdash remarked, recently in Syria and Egypt a tendency has been noticed towards a weakening of the influence of important feudal landowners. But at the same time the class of kulaks is noticeably increasing. The strengthening of the economic position of the kulaks in the country, and consequently of its political influence, hinders the implementation of agrarian reform. The bourgeoisie is by no means capable of thoroughly and consistently bringing about agrarian reform. Proceeding from this, the Communists of Syria consider it their chief task not to allow the bourgeoisie to tear the peasant masses away from the working class, and to strive to attract these masses to themselves and lead them into a resolute struggle for the implementation of land reform."

But Soviet publications have not yet featured anything so hostile to the UAR Government as the article "Savage repressions against the Syrian people" by Wasfi Midani published in WORLD MARXIST REVIEW of June 1959. This complained that the UAR leaders had "established a regime of repression and terror in Syria and Egypt" and were "resorting to anti-communism in the endeavour to conceal their anti-national and anti-democratic policy"; and it went on to give an account of brutalities inflicted, not only on communists, by the security forces of the UAR.

Soviet condemnation of anti-communism in the UAR has been altogether milder in tone. For instance, in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS of May 1959 K. Ivanov denounced the "garrulous anti-communist psychosis" which he said was obstructing national unity against imperialism in the UAR. A politician, said Ivanov, might gradually and unconsciously come under the influence of self-seeking anti-progressive elements among the privileged classes, persons working for self-aggrandizement in disregard of the nation's interests:

> "Finding himself in a difficult situation, he tries to hang on by snatching at the tattered flag of 'anti-communism', at worn out reactionary customs, and by working hand in glove with forces that only yesterday were his bitterest enemies. One thing is clear, however - this can yield him nothing but loss of influence with the masses of the East and both political and ideological discrownment."

Soviet preoccupations It is evident, from examples quoted in this article, that there is at any rate no close coordination between Soviet pronouncements on problems facing Middle East Communists and pronouncements by Middle East Communists themselves. But if, as Khrushchev asserts, Moscow has no responsibility for the individual Communist Parties, it is none the less - perhaps, indeed, all the more - deeply concerned about their activities and fortunes. In this connection the two general issues receiving most attention from Soviet writers on eastern affairs are the role of the communists in nationalist movements and the future of communism as a working-class (and peasant) movement. Of these two issues, it seems that the latter is now being presented as especially urgent.

(Note: Soviet accounts of the activities of the Communist Parties of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan are given in an appendix at the end of this issue. For a Western account of these and other Middle East Communist Parties the reader is referred to W.Z. Laqueur's COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST, London, 1956, and to the chapter "Communism in the Middle East" in the same author's THE SOVIET UNION AND THE MIDDLE EAST, London, 1959.)

SOVIET ANGLE ON THE NEWS

Below are reviewed Soviet newspaper reports on Middle East events published during the period 10th - 31st July

Soviet-Iraqi relations Soviet newspapers reported, on the occasion of the Iraqi revolution anniversary, messages of good wishes from Khrushchev, Voroshilov, Gromyko and the Soviet Central Council of Trade Unions; meetings to celebrate the anniversary in Moscow, and in centres such as Erevan, Stablinabad and Ashkhabad; the formation of a Soviet-Iraqi Friendship Society; and the holding of a special session of the academic board of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, with the participation of the Iraqi Ambassador and an Iraqi cultural delegation which arrived in Moscow on 12th July. An exhibition of modern Iraqi art was opened in the State Museum of Eastern Cultures on 21st July.

The Soviet delegation visiting Iraq for the anniversary celebrations stayed in Iraq from 12th to 22nd July. It consisted of V.V. Kuznetsov, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; V.I. Pakhomov, Deputy Minister of Culture; Z.R. Rakhimbabayev, member of the Commission for Foreign Affairs of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet; A.I. Adzhubey, Editor of IZVESTIYA; and A.N. Nikiforov, Deputy Chairman of the Moscow Soviet. Kuznetsov's press conference of 21st July was only briefly reported in the Moscow press; the invitation to Qasim to visit the USSR was not mentioned.

Soviet-UAR relations Soviet newspapers reported the messages of good wishes sent by Khrushchev and Voroshilov to Abd an-Nasir on the anniversary of the Egyptian revolution. PRAVDA and IZVESTIYA published special articles on the anniversary which made much of the economic achievements of Egypt and the UAR, and of the scale and importance of Soviet aid to the UAR.

Abd an-Nasir's speech to peasants at a land distribution ceremony on 28th July was reported in the Soviet press. Soviet newspapers noted his insistence on the need for land reclamation and on the importance of the High Dam.

Newspapers on 30th July reported the presence in Moscow of Amin Hilli Kamil, the director of the UAR organization for the fulfilment of the five-year plan of industrialization, who had arrived with a group of experts for talks on economic matters, at the invitation of the Soviet Council of Ministers' State Committee for External Economic Relations.

Arrest of Lebanese Communist leader in Damascus PRAVDA of 30th July published a report on the reaction of the Lebanese public to the action of the UAR secret police in arresting the Lebanese Communist Party leader Farajallah Hilu in Damascus on 25th June. On 24th July, said PRAVDA, a delegation of prominent Lebanese had called on President Shihab to draw his attention to the matter, and he had expressed his concern. The Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party had issued an appeal to freedom-loving people throughout the world to protest against the bestial tortures to which Farajallah Hilu was being subjected and to demand his immediate release; and over 1,000 inhabitants of Baghdad had sent a letter of protest to the UN.

Issued by Central Asian Research Centre
in association with
St. Antony's College (Oxford) Soviet Affairs Study Group

APPENDIX

Soviet Accounts of Middle East Communist Parties

(a) Egypt

From EGYPT, by L.Sh. Gordonov, 1953:

(p. 99) "During the (first world) war the working class, which had grown numerically, entered the struggle for the liberation of the country. The trade union movement increased considerably; many tens of trade unions were created, and in part united in the Egyptian confederation of labour which claimed up to 50,000 members. Certain Communist groups, which grew up in 1918, united in 1922 into a single Communist Party; the Egyptian federation of labour was also under the influence of the Communist Party."

.....

(p.103) "At the same time (in the 1920s) in matters of internal policy the Wafdist Government of the national bourgeoisie started on a course of oppression of the workers' movement. The Communist Party and the Egyptian confederation of labour were prohibited, and its leaders put in prison. 'Yellow' trade unions grew up. The weakness of the links of the workers' movement with the main mass of the fellahin, and, later, after the crushing of the Communist Party, the absence of firm revolutionary leadership, told heavily against the movement."

.....

(pp.122-3) "In July 1953 the Egyptian authorities increased repressions against democratic leaders in Egypt. Nineteen progressive leaders accused of belonging to the Communist Party were tried. A number of progressive journalists were also arrested, who had participated in the anti-imperialist struggle of the Egyptian people."

.....

(b) Syria

From MODERN SYRIA, ed. A.F. Sultanov, 1958:

(pp.145-6) "The worsening of the country's economic situation and the intensification of colonial exploitation and also the continuing political oppression gave rise to a further growth of the national liberation struggle

of the Syrian people. These years (1929-1933) saw the formation of the Communist Party of Syria, which became the most resolute and consistent protagonist of national independence. In 1930 the first congress of the Communist Party took place. It was soon however driven underground by the French authorities.

"In 1931 the united conference of the Communist Parties of Syria and Palestine discussed the question of the participation of communists in the national liberation movement and put forward the slogan of uniting the Arab countries in their fight for independence. On 7th November 1931, the 14th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the communists organized demonstrations of the workers in Damascus and other large towns."

.....

"Before the first parliamentary elections the Communist Party of Syria put forward a militant pre-election programme at the basis of which lay the following demands: full independence and unity for Syria; the confiscation of lands belonging to feudal lords, landowners and colonizers and their transfer to the peasants; the establishment of an eight-hour working day and the creation of a workers' and peasants' government; and the development of the fight for peace."

.....

(p.149) "The fourth extended plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Syria, which was held in June 1933, put forward the task of the Arabization of the party (i.e. an increase of the number of Arab members) and the creation of a single workers' and popular anti-imperialist front.

"At the initiative of the Communist Party a trade union conference was held in Damascus in 1934 which laid the foundations for the activities of the revolutionary trade union federation. The Communist Party launched a struggle for unity of action of all the progressive forces of the country. From 1935 it began to publish its central organ in Beirut, the paper SAWT ASH-SHA'B ('The Voice of the People')."

.....

(pp.153-4) "After the capitulation of France in 1940 the Vichy authorities put Syria and the Lebanon under the control of a German-Italian armistice commission. In Syria there developed a national movement of opposition to Fascism and the Vichy authorities. The wide scale of this movement helped towards the successful expulsion of Fascist agents from Syria and Lebanon by the armies of Britain and 'Free France' in June-July 1941. The communists were the initiators and active participants of the anti-Fascist struggle. In Syria and the Lebanon a number of anti-Fascist organizations

grew up. The 'League for the struggle with Fascism and Nazism' and its organ AT-TARIQ, which reported in its pages the course of the liberation movement against Fascism, gained widespread popularity. A 'Society of Friends of the Soviet Union' was formed..."

.....

(p.155) "Under conditions of an intensified national liberation movement a congress of the Syrian Communist Party was held in December 1943-January 1944, at which a new programme called the "National Charter" was adopted. This put forward demands for the genuine independence of Syria, the establishment of a democratic and republican regime and the strengthening of friendly links between Arab peoples. The Charter also contained demands for the nationalization of concerns belonging to foreign companies, a rise in the country's economy and an improvement in the position of the working masses."

.....

(p.157) "After the evacuation of foreign troops from Syria the struggle continued for the defence of the young republic's sovereignty and the liberation of the country's economy from the domination of foreign monopolies, and against the transformation of Syrian territory into a military base for colonial powers. In 1946 new political parties and trade unions were formed in the country, and numerous youth clubs grew up.

"Under pressure from the anti-imperialist and strike movement, which developed after the second world war, the Syrian Parliament on 11th June 1946 adopted a labour law. Although this law in no way satisfied all the workers' demands, its confirmation by Parliament was a considerable victory for the workers.

"Alarmed by the scale of the anti-imperialist movement, Syrian reaction intensified repressions against the people. In December 1947 the Communist Party of Syria was banned and forced to go underground. However, it continued to lead the struggle of the working masses against imperialism and internal reaction."

.....

(p.160) (Under the Shishakli regime) "The Communist Party of Syria conducted a struggle for the creation of a single national front uniting the widest sections of the population - the workers, peasants, intelligentsia and national bourgeoisie. The tasks of the front consisted in destroying the position of foreign capital in the country, winning democratic freedoms and establishing a constitutional parliamentary regime."

.....

(p.162) "This revolution in Syria (the overthrow of Shishakli) was radically different from those which preceded it. 'All preceding "state revolutions"', the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Syria Khalid Bakdash declared, 'took place as the result of an agreement between a limited number of persons, isolated from the people. But the dictatorship of Shishakli crumbled as a result of a broad popular movement, in the process of which a brotherly unity was established between the people, the soldiers' masses and honourable officers.'

"'Syria', remarked Khalid Bakdash, 'needs a government which will enjoy the support of the people. Without this there will be no stability in the country. A government supported by the people will be in a condition to resist all the plots of the imperialists and their agents... The demands of the Syrian people are clear: they are peace, national independence and democracy, and also improvement of the economic position of the people, which comes from this.'"

.....

(pp.163-4) "In a special manifesto (August 1954) the Communist Party of Syria appealed for an intensification of the struggle for the creation of a national-democratic government in the country. This appeal of the Syrian Communists was taken up at crowded demonstrations which took place in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Latakia. It was reflected in petitions on the part of workers, peasants, students, patriotically-minded groups of the national bourgeoisie, youth and women, who demanded of the President the creation of a national democratic government.

"The following parties took part in the parliamentary elections: The People's Party, the National Party, The Arab Socialist Resurrection Party, The National Socialist Party, etc. However, in the pre-election campaign only the Communists consistently defended the interests of the working masses. The Communist Party entered the 'National Union of Syria' which united all the opposition parties fighting for the creation of a national democratic government. At the basis of the programme of this union lay the rejection of military blocs and treaties with the imperialists, and also the consolidation of friendship with all peace-loving states. In the field of internal policy the 'National Union of Syria' demanded freedom of action for political parties and workers' organizations, freedom of the press, speech and assembly, the implementation of land reform, an increase in wages, an eight-hour working day, the liberation of the national economy from the domination of imperialism and the prohibition of new foreign capital investments.

"The parliamentary elections which took place in September-October 1954 witnessed to the growth of the national consciousness of the Syrian people and its resolution in continuing the struggle for peace, freedom and full independence... The General Secretary of the Communist Party of Syria

Khalid Bakdash was elected a deputy to Parliament."

.....

(pp.168-9) "The Syrian Communists were in the forefront of the anti-imperialist fight (in 1956). They showed themselves in favour of strengthening national independence, the implementation of democratic agrarian reform, the liquidation of the remains of feudalism and the defence of the national industry.

"In the resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, adopted at the beginning of May 1956, it was stressed that in the field of international policy the national interests of Syria demand a strengthening of friendly relations with countries of the Socialist camp, and also with India, Indonesia and all the states whose foreign policy is based on the principles proclaimed at the Bandung Conference. The Communist Party appealed for a struggle for the creation of a single anti-imperialist front which would unite all the national democratic forces of the country. 'These forces', it was pointed out in the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Syria, 'are represented by the working class, the peasantry (the poor and middle peasants and the rural bourgeoisie), the middle classes in the towns, the national bourgeoisie, the national intelligentsia..'. Under present conditions, it was remarked in this document, 'the creation of an anti-imperialist front is expressed in the National Union and all forms of cooperation between the Communist Party, the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party and national democratic elements in the People's and National parties and in the religious movement of the Muslims'."

.....

(p.174) "In a declaration of the Communist Party of Syria of the 12th November 1956 it was affirmed: 'The interests of Syria demand a strengthening of friendly relations with the Soviet Union, our great and noble friend. An extension of trade and economic relations with countries of socialism and first and foremost with the Soviet Union is a vitally necessary task, the fulfilment of which will ensure the economic development of Syria and her industrialization and will consolidate her defence'."

.....

(c) Iraq

From THE ARABS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, by A.F. Fedchenko, 1957:

(p.361) "The young, numerically small, but organized working class of Iraq is coming into the forefront of the national liberation movement. The most important evidence of the organizational and ideological-political growth

of the Iraqi working class are the creation of a Communist Party, in 1934, and the increase in its ranks and in its influence among the working masses of the country.

"From the very first days of its existence the Communist Party of Iraq has been conducting a consistent and resolute struggle for the interests of the workers and for the solidarity of all progressive forces in a single national front headed by the working class and its main ally the peasantry. Since 1938 the Communist Party has been illegal."

.....

(pp.362-3) "The illegal society for the liberation of the peasants and its numerous committees, created by the Communist Party of Iraq in various agricultural regions of the country, is carrying on considerable educative and organizational work among the labourers of the country and leading the peasant movements."

.....

(pp.368-370) "Of exceptionally great importance for the intensification of the national liberation struggle of the Iraqi people during the post-war period was the first congress of the Communist Party of Iraq which took place in April 1945. At the congress a programme was adopted which clearly defined the tasks of the party under the conditions prevalent in Iraq after the second world war. It was pointed out in the programme that the Communist Party is fighting for the national independence of the Iraqi people and the peoples of other Arab countries, for the formation of a genuinely democratic government, and for the abolition of all treaties and agreements impairing the sovereignty of the country and the rights of the Iraqi people. Special sections of the programme were devoted to the tasks of the party in the field of the industrial development of the country, the general expansion of the national economy, the liquidation of the dominance of foreign monopolies and the solution of the peasant question. Remarking on the hard situation of the rural labourers, the Communist Party demanded that land should immediately be allotted to peasants with little or no land, that they should be saved from the robbery of usurers, debts should be written off, all unfair taxes and rents abolished, and also that the peasants should be given loans in money and in kind through the state organizations.

"Around the demands which were formulated in the programme of the Communist Party and which became the granite basis that supported the further unity of all progressive forces of the country, there grew and strengthened a liberation movement in Iraq after the second world war.

"The first to rise in the struggle for their national liberation were the Iraqi Kurds, inhabiting the northern and north-eastern part of the

country. The liberation movement of the Kurds was led by a number of illegal organizations which grouped themselves round the popular journal AZADI ('Freedom')... Towards 1945 these organizations united in their ranks several thousand representatives of the progressive Kurdish intelligentsia, students, officers, urban bourgeoisie and shaykhs of certain tribes. The Kurdish section of the Communist Party of Iraq enjoyed great influence among the urban population of the provinces.

"The organizations and societies of the Iraqi Kurds maintained a close tie with the Democratic Party of Persian Kurdistan, which was led by the well known Kurd Muhammad Kazi. The Kurdish patriots in Iraq, however, unlike the party of Muhammad Kazi, not only demanded national and cultural autonomy for the Kurds but also supported the idea of creating a united Kurdish-Arab front in the struggle against foreign and local oppressors, and for genuine independence and democratic development of both the Kurdish and the Arab part of the country."

.....

(pp.379-380) "On 15th January (1949), the anniversary of the signing of the Portsmouth Treaty, a wave of anti-British and anti-Government demonstrations swept over the whole of Iraq. The demonstrators demanded the complete expulsion of the British colonizers, the annulment of the 1930 treaty, the abolition of the state of emergency and the liberation of the progressive leaders who had been arrested. On 25th January, the anniversary of the demonstration of the Baghdad workers, young students came out into the streets of the capital at the call of the students of the medical college who had gone on strike on the day before, with slogans of protest against the policy of Nuri as-Sa'id. The demonstrations of the workers of Baghdad and other towns at the beginning of February 1949 gained a particularly wide following. In three days alone, from 8th to 11th February 200 demonstrators were killed and 150 wounded in clashes with the police, according to press reports...

"At the order of Nuri as-Sa'id a second trial was organized for a group of patriots condemned in 1947. In February 1949 the supreme tribunal in Baghdad sentenced to death four Iraqi Communists, Yusuf Fahid, Husayn Muhammad ash-Shabibi, Zaki Muhammad Bassam and Ibrahim Sadiq, and 56 people to indefinite penal servitude and life imprisonment. On the following day this sentence was carried out upon Yusuf Fahid and Husayn Muhammad ash-Shabibi. Two days after, on 16th February, Zaki Muhammad Bassam and Ibrahim Sadiq were hanged. For several hours the bodies hung in one of the squares of Baghdad to 'frighten' the people. The punishment of the best sons of the Iraqi people aroused the anger and indignation of world public opinion.

"The Iraqi people replied to the execution of the Communists with meetings and demonstrations. They demanded the immediate resignation of

Nuri as-Sa'id and a severe punishment for those guilty of the reprisals against the patriots. Large-scale disturbances began among the Kurdish tribes. Deep underground the Communist Party and democratic organizations continued to conduct a fight for the strengthening of their ranks, and prepared the working masses of the country for new battles with the British colonizers and local reaction."

.....

(p.381) "The peace partisans' movement which in 1949 developed in all countries of the world began to spread in Iraq in 1950. In the middle of July 1950 a temporary national committee of peace defenders, which led the activities of local committees, was set up in Baghdad... The Government forbade newspapers to publish reports on the peace movement. Persons who signed the Stockholm peace appeal, members of committees and peace partisans were subjected to persecution and arrests. After the Warsaw Congress of peace partisans the Iraqi Government slightly relaxed its repressive measures against the peace partisans and even allowed the national committee to issue its own paper... At the beginning of March 1951 in answer to an appeal by the Communist Party massive demonstrations in defence of the political internees were held in the large towns."

.....

(p.391) "The Government of Jamil al-Midfa'i renewed the 'drive against communism'. In April 1953 the police arrested a group of leaders of the Iraqi Communist Party - Baha ad-Din Nuri, Sadiq Ja'far al-Falahi, Bakir Ja'far and Kamil Salih. As was stated by an Iraqi democrat, those arrested were subjected to 'inhuman tortures, to make them confess that they had been inciting the armed forces to mutiny'."

.....

(p.391) "At the end of May 1953 Dulles and Stassen visited Baghdad... and again brought up the question of Iraq's participation in the 'Middle East Command'... (There were many meetings and demonstrations of protest.) In reply to this bloody reprisals were organized in Baghdad prison against 150 political prisoners sentenced for communist activity. Twenty political prisoners were killed and more than 100 seriously injured. The workers of Baghdad organized demonstrations of protest which went on for three days... On 27th June the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party published an appeal to the Iraqi people and also an appeal to the UN, the World Peace Council and other international organizations giving details of the bloody events of 18th June..."

.....

(p.398) (March 1954 - at the time of talks concerning Iraq's adherence to the Turkish-Pakistani pact) "At this perilous moment for the country the courageous and confident voice of the Iraqi Communist Party again made itself heard. Its Central Committee, in its report 'The front of national struggle against imperialism and war' published in AL-QAIDAH, and also in numerous pamphlets and appeals, declared that the Anglo-US imperialists in cooperation with Iraqi reactionary forces were working... to turn the country into a war base..."

.....

(p.410) "The declaration of the Communist Party of Iraq published in February 1946 pointed to the growing opposition of the working masses of towns and village to the anti-national policy of the Nuri as-Sa'id Government... The Central Committee of the Communist Party called on the Iraqi people to strengthen their opposition to (this) policy and to demand from the ruling circles the strict fulfilment of the decisions of the Bandung Conference, the pursuit of a neutral policy and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR. The Central Committee of the Communist Party demanded the granting of constitutional rights to the Iraqi people, and the annulment of anti-popular and anti-national decrees passed by parliament in 1954-5."

.....

(d) Jordan

From JORDAN IN THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, by Ye. A. Lebedev, 1956;

(p.93) "The most important distinguishing feature of the post-war national liberation movement of the Jordanian people consists in the fact that the Communist Party of Jordan, which was formed as an organization in 1951, moves more and more towards the vanguard of this movement.

"The Communist Party leads the struggle of the workers for their rights, for an improvement in the conditions of life, for peace between the peoples and for the genuine national independence of Jordan. It is not therefore by chance that the Jordanian reactionary circles at the behest of the imperialists attempt to deal their hardest blow at the Communist Party, and first and foremost at its leaders.

"On 29th December 1951 the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Jordan, Fuad Nassar, and a number of other leading figures in the party were arrested.

"As early as 1947 the Jordanian Parliament adopted an anti-Communist law stipulating imprisonment for three to 15 years for Communist activities. The Communist Party was in fact declared outside the law.

Fuad Nassar was charged with inciting the population to overthrow the existing regime in Jordan..."

.....

(p.117) "On 7th March 1956 the Jordanian Government rescinded all the repressive measures which Glubb had taken against patriots who participated in the anti-imperialist demonstrations in December 1955 and January 1956... The Government released from prison many patriots who had been arrested and condemned while Gen. Glubb was in Jordan. On 31st July 1956 the Jordanian Council of Ministers passed a resolution for the release from prison of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Jordan, Fuad Nassar. This was an enormous victory for the patriotic forces of Jordan."

.....

(p.123) "An important part in the national liberation movement in Jordan was played by the organized formation in 1951 of the Communist Party of Jordan. In spite of the fact that the Communist Party immediately after its rise was subjected to severe persecutions from reactionary circles and was banned and its General Secretary and other leading figures were arrested and condemned to penal servitude, it continued and continues to lead the struggle of the popular masses for the freedom and independence of the country."

.....

Issured by Central Asian Research Centre
in association with
St. Antony's College (Oxford) Soviet Affairs Study Group